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LETTER DATED 14 JULY 1999 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

As you will recall, in my letter to you of 10 July 1999 regarding the East Timor popular consultation process (S/1999/773), I proposed rescheduling the start of voter registration to 16 July 1999 to allow time for the Government of Indonesia to take concrete steps, based on specific criteria provided by me, to improve the security situation.

In subsequent meetings in East Timor with senior officials of the Government, my Special Representative for the East Timor popular consultation has been assured that the authorities are taking steps towards the fulfilment of those criteria.

It is not, however, possible for me to conclude at present that the necessary security conditions exist for the peaceful implementation of the popular consultation process throughout the Territory, as called for under paragraph 3 of the agreement on security arrangements dated 5 May 1999 reached by the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal and the United Nations (A/53/951-S/1999/513, annex III). As I noted in my letter to you dated 10 July, the security situation in the Territory as a whole remains serious, and there has not been time to assess properly how far recent steps taken by the Government will result in an improvement. In particular, as I have previously reported to the Council, violence and intimidation have continued to be carried out with impunity by pro-autonomy militias. Nevertheless, determined as I believe we should be to go ahead, undeterred by the intimidation, and in view of the need to adhere to the shortest possible time-frame, I have decided to begin the registration, based on positive assurances by the Indonesian authorities, on the condition that meaningful, visible improvements in the security situation will be observed in the immediate future.

The United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) will continue to keep the security situation constantly under review and I intend to make another assessment of conditions based on its objective evaluation, halfway through the registration period. At that time, I will determine whether there has been enough significant progress to continue registration on the basis that the people of East Timor are able to participate in the popular consultation safely and free of intimidation.

I have informed the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal of this decision and I will keep the Council fully informed of any future developments.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN